

WAR TROPHY.

Baby Bertha.

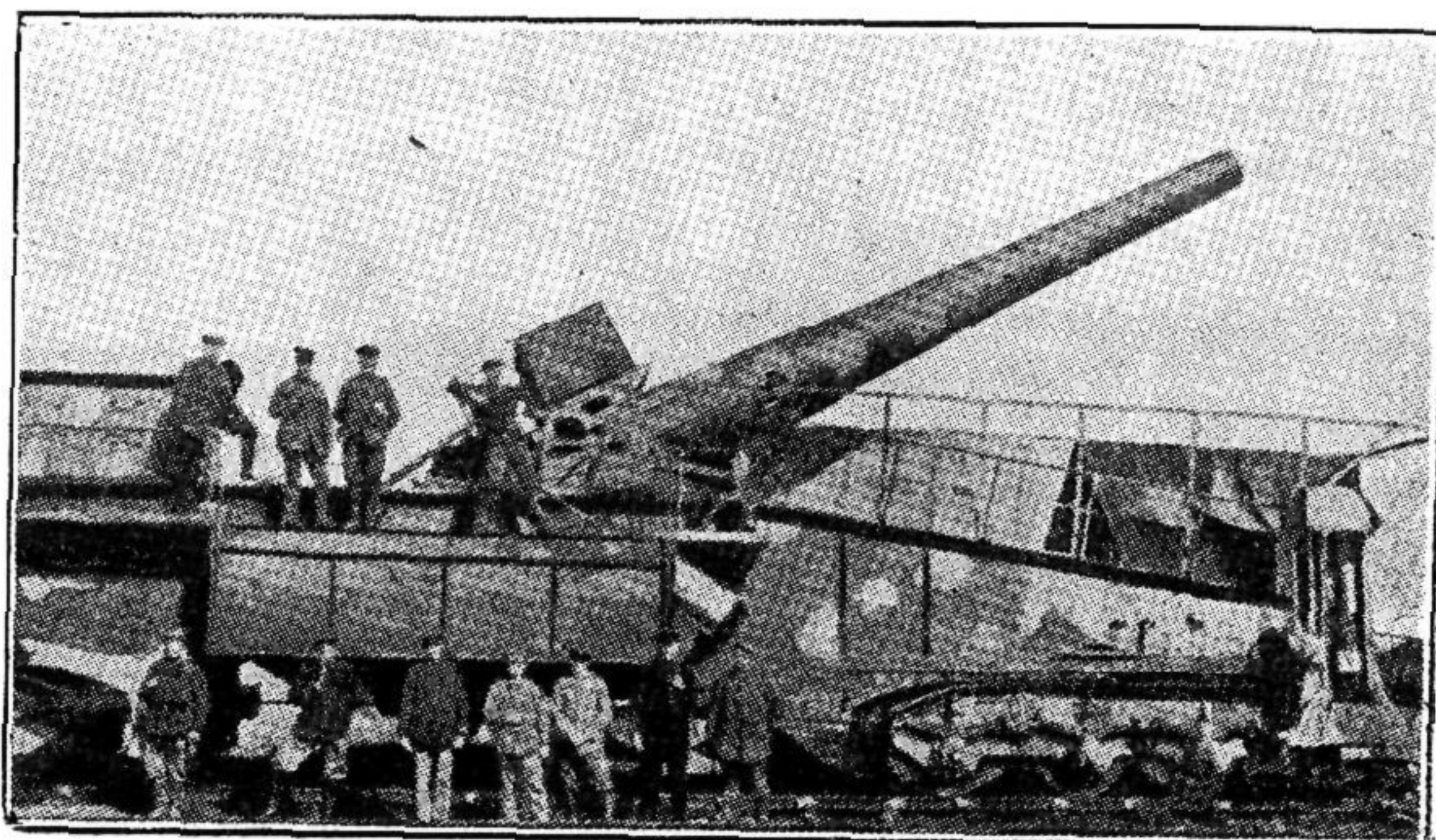
Many have been the trophies and souvenirs brought home from the late war by members of the A.I.F. History is being made, and in many prominent positions throughout New South Wales monuments have been erected that will stand as a perpetual testimony to the brave deeds accomplished by Australia's sons and daughters, many of whom laid down their lives for the Empire. One of the greatest of these trophies is the large German 11in. gun captured by the Australians, and unveiled on the 26th March, in a position adjacent to



Lieutenant George Burrows, M.C. (and Bar).
Block by courtesy "Sydney Mail."

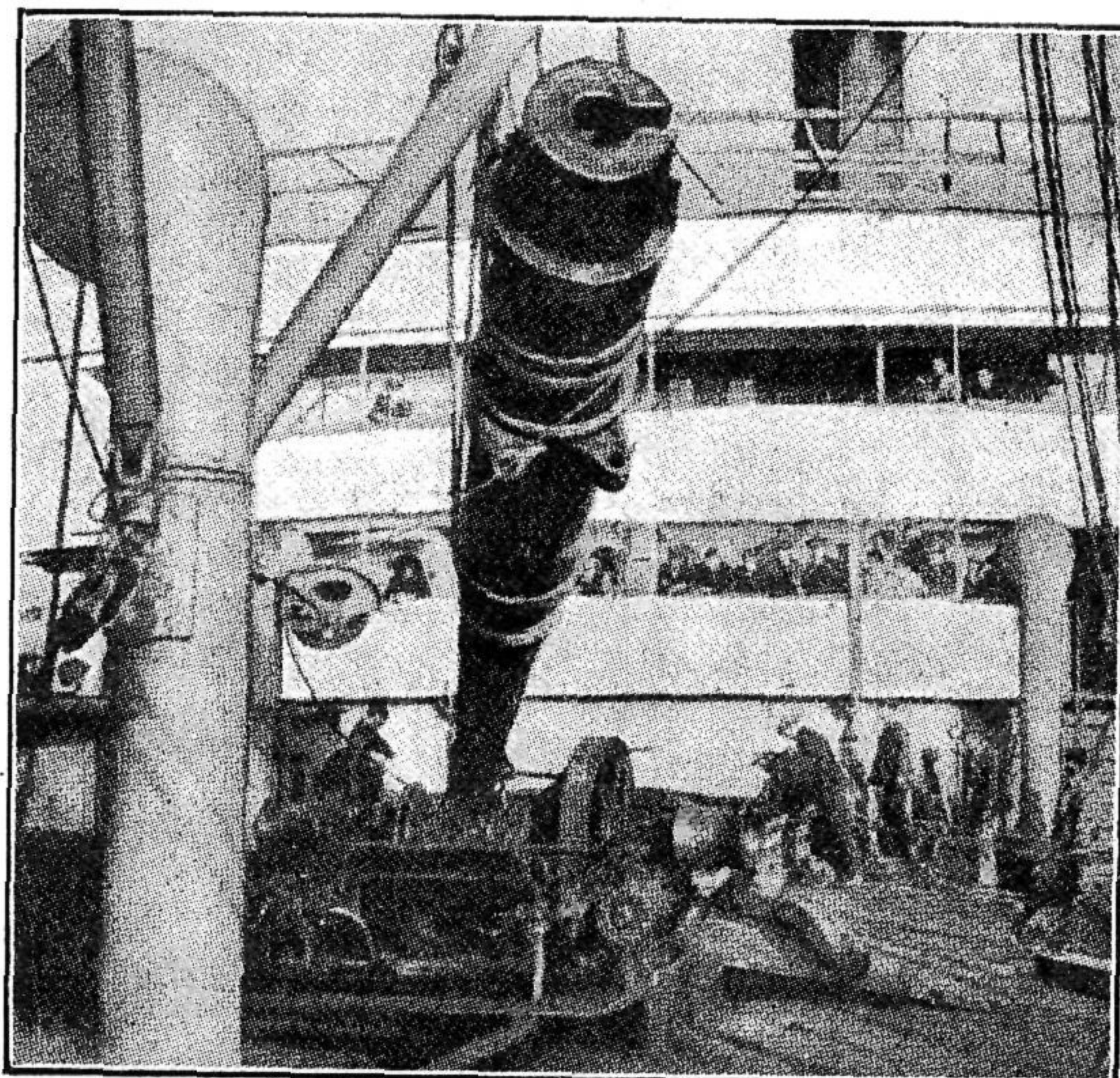
the Central Railway Station. The ceremony of unveiling was performed before cheering thousands by Major-General Lee, State Commandant, besides whom there were present, Major-General Sir Charles Rosenthal, Brigadier-General Cox, C.B., Colonel Kingdon, Colonel Brughe, A.Q.M.G., Captain Soane, A.D.C., Mr. R. T. Ball, Minister for Works, Mr. James Fraser, C.M.G., Chief Railway Commissioner, and many Railway officers.

Major-General Lee, in addressing the gathering, complimented all concerned in the unloading and reassembling of the gun.



The Gun and some of its German Crew.

General Sir C. Rosenthal, speaking of the capture of the gun by the 31st Battalion of the 8th Brigade of the 5th Division, jocularly remarked that as it was a Victorian Brigade, they would no doubt have kept the great trophy for Victoria, but for the fact that they did not have the proper railway gauge there for it, and General C. Cox added: "Thanks to our 4ft. 8½in. gauge we have this trophy permanently." The Chief Commissioner of Railways (Mr. James Fraser) remarked that he had been authoritatively informed that Great Britain had built the biggest gun on earth as an answer to the German "Big

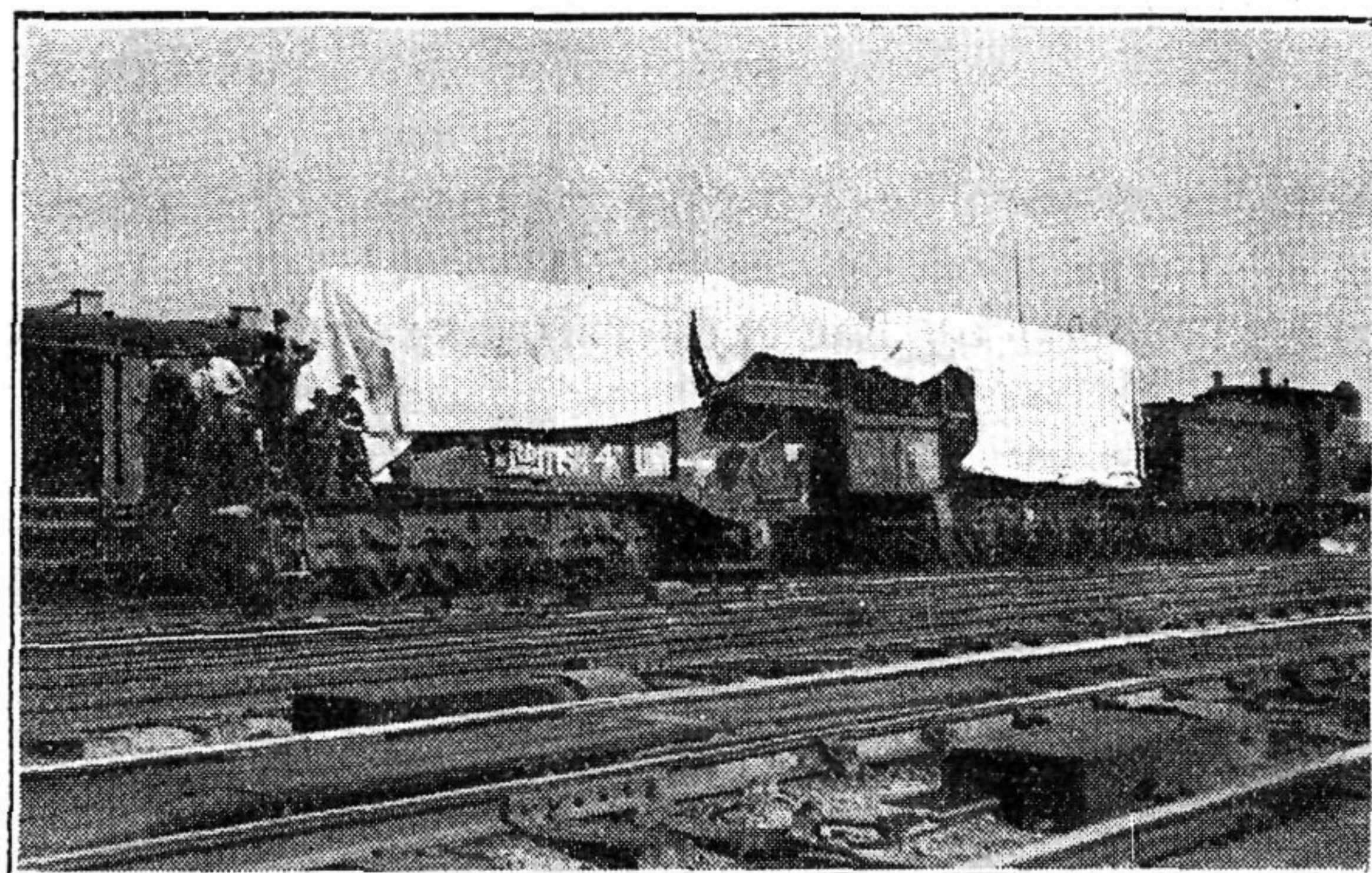


German 11in. Gun being taken on board the "Don-garra," formerly the (captured) German liner "Stetsenfels," en route for Australia. The gun and its carriage represent the largest pieces of cargo ever shipped between decks on an ocean liner. The gun weighs 47 tons, and its carriage 80 tons.

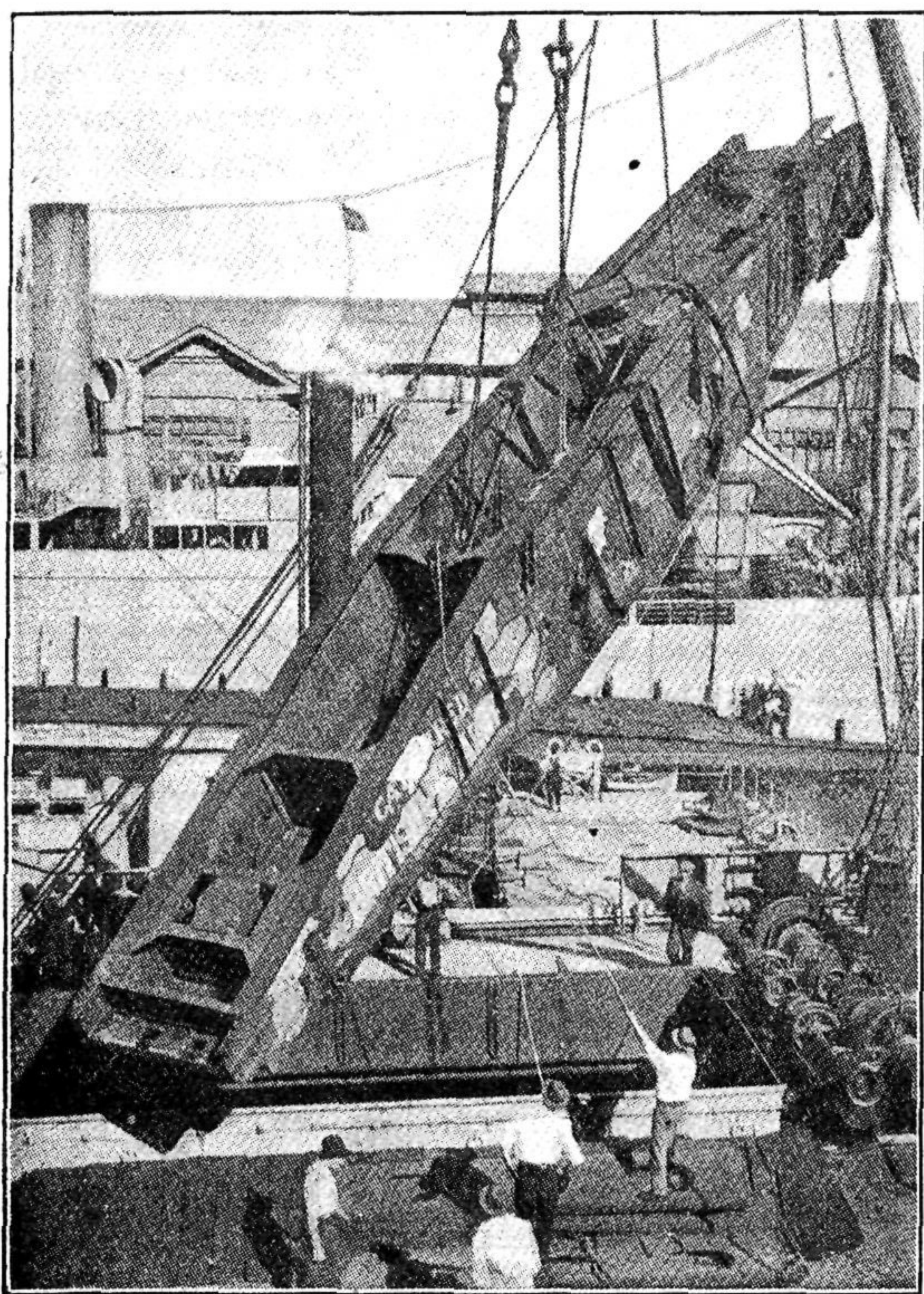
Bertha." It never fired a shot—there was no occasion for it—but it had a length of 83ft. (being 11ft. longer than the gun in Railway Square), and a range of 87 miles. It was intended as our answer to Krupp's if the war had lasted any longer. Lieutenant George Burrows, M.C. (and Bar), who was decorated for his gallantry in connection with the capture of the gun, is a native of Penrith, N.S.W., and the son of Mr. Edward Burrows, who was employed for a number of years in the Locomotive Branch at Penrith. Mr. Burrows, senr., also has two sons employed in the Locomotive Branch, one on the clerical staff in the office of the Chief Mechanical Engineer, and the other in the Eveleigh Workshops, and a son-in-law, Mr. Chas. Barton, Assist. Engineer, Signal Engineers' Branch. The following is a full account of the capture given by Lieutenant Burrows himself, which will no doubt prove of interest to our readers.

On the morning of August 8, 1918, the Australian Corps, with two Divisions of Canadians on their left, attacked the German position in front of Villiers-Bretonneux, the Aus-

tralian portion of the line extending from the Somme River to a point some hundreds of yards south of Villiers-Bretonneux. Preparations for the attack were carried out secretly along the front for several weeks before the attack. A heavy concentration of artillery was brought on to the front, and every wood for some distance behind the line concealed tanks, ready to move forward into position,



The Gun being hauled from Eveleigh to Station East Box.



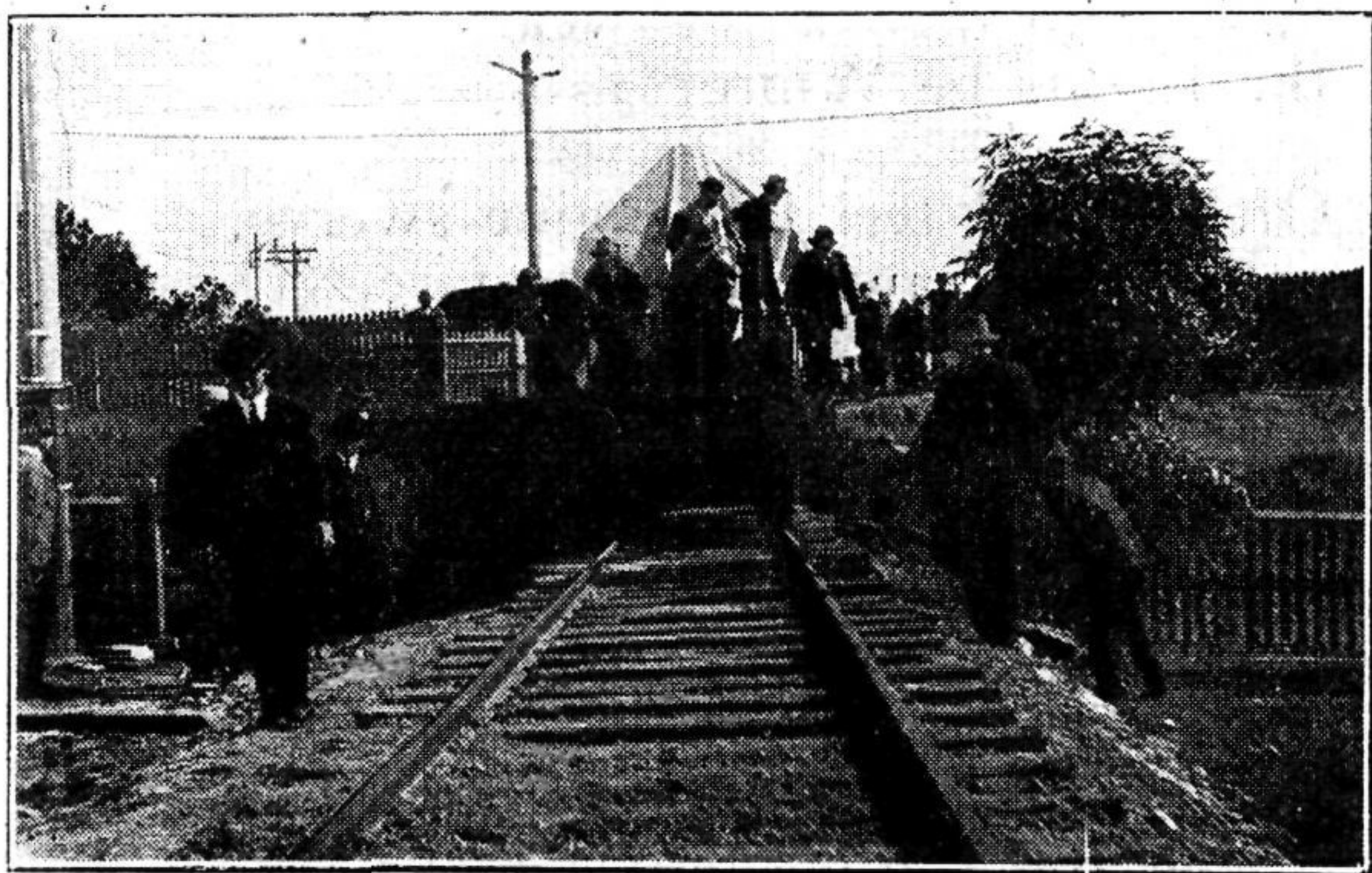
The Immense Under-Carriage of the Gun being unshipped from the "Dongarra." It weighs 80 tons, and altogether the great trophy weighs about 187 tons.

during the night prior to the attack. The infantry and tanks got into position under cover of the noise created by aeroplanes flying overhead for that purpose. A dense fog came over at about 2 a.m., and did not clear until about 9 a.m. Following a terrific bombardment, the infantry supported by tanks, attacked at 5 a.m., and after passing the German front and support lines very little opposition was met with until reaching the final objective, which was the old Amiens defence line in front of Harbonnieres. The attack was well organised, and came as a complete surprise to the enemy.

Referring to the particular part of the front where the gun was captured, in the 5th Division sector, a section of sappers from the 8th Field Company Engineers was detailed to go over with the 31st Battalion. Their work on arrival at final objective was to put out wire entanglements in front of the front line, and dig a series of strong points about 200 yards behind the front line for the reserve companies. On arrival at final objective, east of Harbonnieres, about 200 yards in front of the front line, there was a train consisting of 11.5in. naval gun on railway mounting, a locomotive, two ammunition trucks, and about twenty other trucks. The rear portion of the train was on fire. An Engineer officer went forward, examined the train, and found it to

be in working order, and with the assistance of two sappers raised steam. Whilst this was being done the water feed-pipe from the injector to the tank was perforated by a machine-gun bullet. This was bound round with tracing tape. The burning portion of the train was detached, shunted into a siding, and the engine, gun, and ammunition trucks were brought back about 600 yards behind the lines, to where the rails had been blown out by shell fire. A message was sent back to the Field Company Headquarters for a party to repair the track. This was done during the night. The message also asked for more water to be sent forward.

Steam was again raised the following morning, and in trying to move the gun back the gun slipped off the rear bogie wheels off the rails. There were nine lifting jacks on the train. With the aid of these the gun was got on to the track again and brought back to Bayonvillers the following morning at 2 o'clock, and a receipt obtained from the officer sent up from Army Headquarters to take over the gun. The gun was complete in every detail, ready for firing, with 37 rounds of ammunition in the trucks. Each shell weighed over 6000lb.



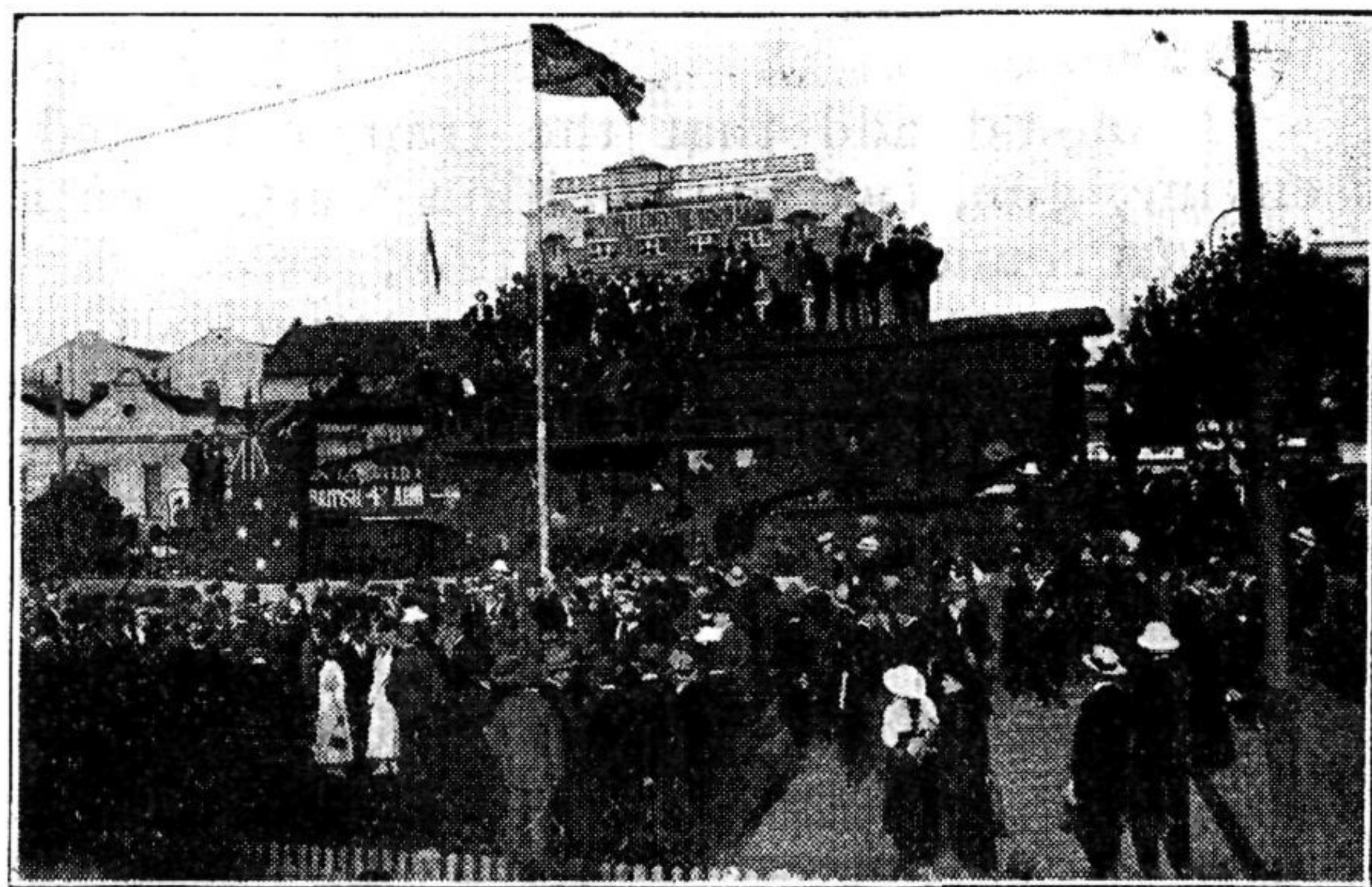
Taking the Temporary Trestle which was erected over the Tramway Track from Horse Dock, Sydney Station.

A Further Account.

The above article by Lieutenant George Burrows is a first-hand account by the man who captured the gun. He is a well-set-up Australian, and an engineer, but will shortly engage in outdoor pursuits in the Bathurst district. His article refers to himself as "an engineer officer," and it required some persuasion to obtain anything further or permission to publish General Birdwood's letter. Apparently the perils of war could not upset

him, but the idea of "blowing his own trumpet" was a real terror to him. Nevertheless, historical records should be complete, and the following further facts were obtained:—

"Only three of us—the two sappers and I—were on the train. I obtained a receipt for the gun from an officer sent up from the Australian Corps Headquarters. He was an artillery major. This receipt in the ordinary course of events was filed with the Company records.



The Gun in position after the Unveiling Ceremony.

"When I returned to the Field Company's headquarters two days later I was paraded before the Divisional General, Sir Talbot Hobbs, and was asked what had happened and how the gun was captured. I told the General, and also put in a full report.

"From the time I handed over the gun I did not see it again, but later on heard it had been exhibited in Paris.

"There was one amusing incident, in connection with which I had better make the position clear. I was an officer of the 14th Field Company (5th Division), Engineers, and was on loan to the 8th Field Company only for the attack. I was on loan to them when the gun was captured. After the gun had been taken behind our lines the O.C. of the 8th Field Company sent a man up with a pot of white paint, and he painted on the side of the gun in large letters:—

Captured by the 8th Field Company.

"Naturally the seizure of such a big gun—with the bogies it weighed 185 tons—excited some interest. Besides, it was the gun that the Germans had brought up specially to shell Amiens. Well, when the announcement of the 8th Field Company appeared on it the C.O. of the 31st Battalion was not satisfied.

As soon as he spotted it he sent along a man with another pot of paint, and the first announcement was painted out, and the new words painted on:—

Captured by the 31st Battalion.

"It was interesting, as well as amusing; but the fact is I was not under the orders of the C.O. of the 31st Battalion, but was under the orders of the O.C. of the 8th Field Company, although really an officer of the 14th Field Company.

"I should add that the train consisted of engine, gun, two ammunition trucks containing 37 rounds of ammunition, two officers' carriages, and about 25 other vehicles loaded with cordite charges, ammunition, and other war paraphernalia. The fire at the rear part of the train was caused by shellfire from a British tank, and a number of Germans were burnt to death. Cavalry rounded up about 800 of the enemy in the vicinity.

"It was a bit exciting while we were trying to get the gun away. I was all prepared to destroy her if we failed; but all's well that ends well."

General Birdwood's Congratulations.

"Very Great Courage and Determination."

The following letter requires no comment:—

Headquarters, Australian Imperial Force,
B.E.F., France,
21st September, 1918.

Dear Burrows,—I send you my very hearty congratulations on the award of a Bar to the Military Cross in recognition of your conspicuous bravery, initiative, and devotion to duty during our operations near Villers-Bretonneux on the 8th August. You were in command of a section of sappers attached to one of the attacking battalions, and reached the final objective east of Harbonnières. Some two hundred yards beyond your new line a long-range 11.5in. gun on railway mounting, a locomotive, and several ammunition wagons and coaches were standing on a siding. The latter vehicles were on fire. Without hesitation you rushed forward, with two sappers, and, despite heavy enemy machine-gun and artillery fire, raised steam on the locomotive, and shunted the burning coaches into another siding. You then coupled up with the gun and ammunition wagons, and brought them well back within our lines.

Your action called for very great courage and determination, and I thank you so much for it. With good wishes, yours sincerely,

W. R. BIRDWOOD.

The illustrations given herewith show Lieutenant George Burrows, M.C. (and Bar). The gun and some of its German crew, when captured. The gun being loaded into the Don-garra, in England. The undercarriage being unloaded on arrival in Sydney. The gun being hauled by a super-heated "T" class locomotive from Eveleigh to Station East Box. Here the engine was taken off the front end, and attached to rear. Photo shows gun being pushed. The gun taking the temporary "trestle" which was erected over the Tramway track. The gun in position after the unveiling ceremony.

WILL THE LIGHTS BE WHITE?

By Cy Warman.

One of the best known poems of Cy Warman, who died a few years ago, was "Will the Lights be White?"

Oft, when I feel my engine swerve,
As o'er strange rails we fare,
I strain my eye around the curve
For what awaits us there
When swift and free she carries me
Through yards unknown at night
I look along the line to see
That all the lamps are white.

The blue light marks the crippled car,
The green light signals slow;
The red light is a danger light,
The white light, "let her go."
Again the open fields we roam,
And, when the night is fair,
I look up in the starry dome
And wonder what's up there.

For who can speak for those who dwell
Behind the curving sky?
No man has ever lived to tell
Just what it means to die.
Swift toward life's terminal I trend,
The run seems short to-night;
God only knows what's at the end—
I hope the lamps are white.